

## Message Text

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70

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15

ACDA-19 IO-14 AID-20 PC-04 NIC-01 OMB-01 COME-00

DRC-01 /158 W

----- 126513

R 141947Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1779

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

DIA WASHDC

USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 9705

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT VE

SUBJECT: ELECTION OVERVIEW AS CAMPAIGN ENTERS FINAL STAGES

REF: STATE 222224

1. AS VENEZUELA'S LONG ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN MOVES INTO ITS FINAL STAGES, PROSPECTS CONTINUE TO BE EXCELLENT THAT THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS WILL BE PEACEFUL AND ORDERLY, THOUGH ISOLATED DISTURBANCES, ENGENDERED BY FIERCE CAMPAIGN RHETORIC, CAN BE EXPECTED. NO SUBSTANCE APPEARS TO EXIST TO OCCASIONAL RUMORS OF COUP PLOTTING, AND THE SUBVERSIVE THREAT TO THE ELECTORAL PROCESS SEEMS MINIMAL. ON NOVEMBER 13 DEFENSE MINISTER GUSTAVO PARDI DAVILA ASSURED THE SUPREME ELECTORAL COUNCIL THAT THE ARMED FORCES WILL MAINTAIN ORDER DURING THE VOTING ON DECEMBER 9.

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2. ALTHOUGH THE CAMPAIGN HAS HEATED UP FOLLOWING AD'S EXPLOITATION OF THE GAITHER POLL SHOWING ITS CANDIDATE CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ AHEAD IN THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE (CARACAS 9297 AND 9230) AND PRESIDENT CALDERA'S CRACKDOWN ON FRACTIOUS PEREZJIMENISTAS (CARACAS 9555 AND 9425), THE CAMPAIGN CONTINUES TO FOCUS ON DOMESTIC ISSUES, AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND ANTI-US THEMES THUS FAR HAVE BEEN LARGELY AVOIDED.

3. MEANTIME THE CAMPAIGN ITSELF IS PROCEEDING UNEXCEPTIONALLY, AMID AN INCRASING BARRAGE OF CAMPAIGN PROPAGANDA IN ALL THE MEDIA AND IN THE STREETS. THE MAJOR CANDIDATES CONTINUE TO CAMPAIGN INTENSIVELY IN ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, AND WITH FANFARE PRESIDENT CALDERA IS INAUGURATING A WIDE RANGE ON INDUSTRIAL AND PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS IN ORDER TO GIVE A BOOST TO COPEI'S LORENZO FERNANDEZ. DURING THE FINAL STAGES OF THE CAMPAIGN THE POLITICAL PARTIES PLAN TO CONCENTRATE THEIR EFFORTS IN THE CARACAS AREA, FEATURING MARCHES AND MAMMOTH RALLIES.

4. MOST IMPARTIAL OBSERVERS STILL VIEW THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE AS VERY CLOSE BETWEEN AD AND COPEI; MORE PROBABLY LEAN TO COPEI THAN AD, BUT NOT WITH ANY GREAT DEGREE OF ASSURANCE. THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS THAT A LARGE, PERHAPS RECORD, NUMBER OF NULL PRESIDENTIAL VOTES MAY BE CAST, ESPECIALLY BY PEREZJIMENISTAS (PROVIDED PEREZ JIMENEZ DOES NOT DESIGNATE HIS CHOSEN CANDIDATE, WHICH SEEMS LIKELY AT THIS LATE DATE). ABSTENTIONS MAY ALSO BE HIGH, WITH PEREZJIMENISTAS, AMONG OTHERS, CHOOSING THIS (ILLEGAL) ALTERNATIVE TO EXPRESS THEIR DISPLEASURE WITH THE CURRENT ELECTORAL PROCESS. A LARGER-THAN-USUAL PROPORTION OF NULL VOTES AND ABSTENTIONS WOULD FURTHER COMPLICATE THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE OUTCOME OF THE CONGRESSIONAL RACES, ALTHOUGH THIS COULD REINFORCE A POSSIBLE TREND TOWARD INCREASED COPEI AND AD REPRESENTATION IN CONGRESS. ASSUMING THAT AD-COPEI COOPERATION ON KEY ISSUES CONTINUES IN CONGRESS (WHICH IS NOT CERTAIN, BUT PROBABLY), THE NEXT PRESIDENT WOULD HAVE A FREER HAND IN CARRYING OUT HIS PROGRAM.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** NATIONAL ELECTIONS, ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, ELECTION INTERFERENCE  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 14 NOV 1973  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** golinofr  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** n/a  
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**Line Count:** 98  
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**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** STATE 222224  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** golinofr  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 16 JAN 2002  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <16-Jan-2002 by thigpegh>; APPROVED <08 FEB 2002 by golinofr>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ELECTION OVERVIEW AS CAMPAIGN ENTERS FINAL STAGES  
**TAGS:** PINT, VE  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005